

FSA-NASS Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony
February 27, 2004
FSA Administrator James Little's Prepared Remarks

Let me begin by thanking Administrator Ron Bosecker and his staff for working closely with our staff to prepare and update this new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The FSA-NASS cooperative and Data-sharing efforts go back many years and have been for the betterment of the Department's and each Agencies' customer service delivery efforts.

Clearly, NASS' national, state, and county-level estimates for such things as crop prices, yields, acreages, production, cropland values, and livestock herd sizes, among other estimates, are beneficial to FSA's program delivery and analysis and to our budget estimation process. In turn, FSA's program delivery-based data collection efforts lead to databases, such as the name and address file, the reported and determined acreage file, and our aerial photography files, which are beneficial to NASS' survey development and estimates verification efforts. The list of cooperative details, both as represented through the MOU we are about to sign, and as contracted by FSA with NASS, as the need arises, is substantial. It is to both Agencies' credit that most, if not all, of our cooperative efforts occur without hitches and in a generally timely fashion.

Today's updated MOU represents a confirmation of this relationship. It also cements recent streamlining in our cooperative relationship.

In support of FSA's needs, I would like to briefly note the following newly identified ways in which NASS will assist FSA in ways that we believe will improve our program delivery and analysis capabilities. In particular, NASS has agreed to:

- Provide FSA with official NASS estimates and unpublished data of prices received by farmers and marketing weights to be used in the computation of counter-cyclical payments and for other uses as needed and agreed upon by our two Agencies in an annual review meeting.
- Assist FSA in administering various disaster relief programs by providing published and unpublished NASS estimates at the county, state, and national levels, recognizing, of course, that unpublished estimates will be provided by NASS to the extent confidentiality and statistical reliability restraints are not compromised.
- Provide FSA access to producer and operation level NASS databases in the NASS data lab.
- Provide its own state offices with data made available by FSA to NASS headquarters personnel, and ensure that the confidentiality of such data is maintained by NASS state offices in the same manner as such data are confidentially maintained by NASS headquarters personnel.
- Provide FSA advice and assistance without charge on statistical methodology to support FSA analysis needs.

With that, I would like to extend my gratitude to NASS for its past cooperation and dedicate FSA to seeking to adapt and improve our relationship as future events dictate.